CANADIAN FOREIGN POLICY SERIES

Overview

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Canada Against Apartheid

Introduction

A year and more ago, the Eminent Persons Group of the Commonwealth concluded, in its report on South Africa, that "the alternative to a negotiated solution would be appalling chaos, bloodshed and destruction".

That group was the closest anyone came to finding a formula which might lead to a negotiated end to apartheid. But its mission failed and tensions and killings have continued.

Canada has already played a major role in building international pressure against apartheid. It has implemented all of the sanctions and the measures proposed by the last Commonwealth conference and has encouraged more powerful Western countries to increase pressure for change.

At the same time, Canada has been able to develop a relationship of trust with the Front Line States and the African National Congress that it is hoped has helped strengthen the hand of black moderates.

Canada shares with other Western democracies an obligation to seek a peaceful end to apartheid.

Our challenge is to maintain steady growing pressure upon the South African government to change apartheid and, at the same time, encourage real dialogue between white South Africans and the leadership of the black community.

The Right Honourable Joe Clark
Secretary of State for External Affairs
(Extract of a letter to the *Toronto Star*, August 28, 1987)

External Affairs Canada
Affaires extérieures Canada

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Why is Canada involved in the campaign to end apartheid?

By making colour the hallmark of the Southern African political and economic system, apartheid flouts the international moral standards that underpin the search for peace and prosperity in the family of nations.

While many other countries also deny human rights and let a minority grab more than its fair share of wealth and power, South Africa singles itself out as the only place in the world where racism is the cornerstone of government and the economic system.

Canada is one of many nations that match their condemnation of apartheid with action.

In keeping with its policy of constructive internationalism, Canada has accepted the challenge of leadership against apartheid, acting as a bridge between developing nations and the industrial world.

In the Commonwealth, among the Francophone nations, at the Economic Summit of the big seven industrial nations, and elsewhere, Canada has kept up the pressure for fundamental change in South Africa.

What will happen in South Africa when apartheid ends?

The goal set by black leaders — and shared by Canada — is equality for all of its people, whether they are white, black or members of of the smaller minorities of people of mixed race or of Asian ancestry who now have a few more rights than blacks in South Africa.

Some white South Africans claim that an end to the present system will mean Marxist rule, violence and mismanagement. In fact, the real danger is that the longer legitimate opposition to apartheid is suppressed, the more attractive radical solutions will become in the black community.

Today no one ideology has a monopoly on the thinking of the black leadership; many approaches would be represented in genuine dialogue between black and white representatives to chart a transition from apartheid to equality.

Canada and other countries are helping a wide cross section of black South Africans get the education that will let them take leadership positions in their country in the future.

The real fear of many white South Africans is that they will lose the economic and political advantages they enjoy under apartheid, but this is not a justification for racism.

What is Canada doing about apartheid?

We are exerting pressure in several ways. One is through measures such as trade restrictions that are frankly intended to isolate South Africa, pressuring its government to work with representatives of the black majority in creating a non-radical representative government founded on equality.

Canada accepts the verdict of the Commonwealth Group of Eminent Persons that only "concrete measures" will bring South Africa's white leaders to the bargaining table.

While the South African government still holds out against meaningful talks with black leaders, Canada pursues its own contacts with both blacks and whites in South Africa and with other concerned countries, looking for ways to break the impasse.

Canada also extends assistance to the victims of apartheid, inside South Africa and in neighbouring nations.

What measures has Canada imposed?

Since 1985, Canada has introduced more than two dozen sanctions developed by the Commonwealth and the United Nations.

For example, Canada has cut off imports of agricultural products that had been running at about $75 million a year; limited consular services so it is more difficult for South Africans to get visas to visit Canada, and stopped new loans and investments in South Africa.

A survey of the whole list can be found elsewhere in this booklet.

Canadian business has also been pulling out of South Africa because, as the administrator of the Canadian Code of Conduct for Canadian Companies Operating in South Africa put it in his 1986 report, "the South African game is no longer worth the candle".

In 1986 and the first four months of 1987, ten Canadian companies have stopped operations in South Africa, leaving only five with half ownership or more of their affiliates there.

Don't sanctions hurt blacks too?

Both sanctions and the withdrawal of multinational business from South Africa undoubtedly have some effect on blacks.

But most black leaders – including Archibishop Desmond Tutu – believe that sanctions are necessary despite their effect on the black community, because they are a means to pressure the South African government to make changes and open the door to better times for blacks in future. And without those changes the apartheid system will soon be inflicting enormous suffering on the millions of its non-white victims.

Are sanctions helping to bring change?

While the government of South Africa still holds out against fundamental change, its views are not unanimously shared. Leading businessmen and others are in contact with black leaders, exploring ways they can work together in a multiracial South Africa; some have even taken the bold step of meeting outside the country with the banned African National Congress.

This is a significant development, for the purpose of sanctions is to bring South Africa to its senses, not to its knees.

Will there be more sanctions?

Sanctions are not taken for their own sake. They should be effective in bringing movement. If there is no progress in dismantling apartheid, Canada is prepared to take further steps – right up to cutting off all diplomatic and economic ties with South Africa.

But the embassy would only be closed as a last resort because it would limit Canada's future effectiveness in pressing for change, maintaining contact with South African authorities, and delivering aid programmes to South Africans.

It would also end the Canadian embassy's own program of assistance to the victims of apartheid and leave Canadians who provide private assistance without the support of Canadian diplomats on the spot in any difficulties they have with South African authorities.

And it would limit the Canadian government's knowledge of conditions in South Africa to what it could glean from news reports that are subject to censorship by the South African government.

Canadian policy has been to build up the pressure, step by step, in cooperation with other countries that also oppose apartheid, until the South African government sees the rest of the world will not relent in its determination to see an end to the present system.

What about assistance to the victims of apartheid?

Canada's help to the victims of apartheid inside South Africa centers on education, humanitarian relief, and community development.

The stress on education looks to the future, when blacks take their rightful place in South Africa.

A $9 million education fund is helping to put dozens of black South Africans through university. It also supports small-scale initiatives such as teaching farm labourers to read and write and helping adults complete high school.

Other small-scale programs are supported from a $350,000 fund administered by the Canadian Embassy in South Africa.

Sometimes education and community development reinforce each other, as they do in one embassy-sponsored program which provides materials and equipment to train women in working with textiles and beads as a new source of income for themselves and their families.

Other community development programs sponsored by Canada include roofing-over springs in some rural communities to protect them from pollution, and launching community gardens that let people improve their nutrition at little cost.

In poor communities, such small-scale programs can make a real difference to the quality of life.

Canada also offers aid funds for legal counsel to apartheid's detainees and living expenses for their families.

In 1987 $2 million was set aside for the families of political detainees and for legal aid.

Canadian businesses operating in South Africa are also expected to meet minimum standards of fairness under a Code of Conduct set out by the government.

While there is still room for improvement, the 1986 report of the Code's independent administrator found that all Canadian affiliates in South Africa support and implement the principle of equal pay for blacks and whites doing equal or comparable work.

Why do South Africa's neighbours need special help?

South Africa dominates all of southern Africa, and neighbouring countries have suffered both military raids and economic pressure.

These countries need to lessen their economic dependence on South Africa so they can pursue their own development and oppose the racism on their doorstep.

What is Canada doing for these countries?

Canadian aid to South Africa's neighbours is designed to strengthen their economies and make them less vulnerable to South African pressure.

Over a five year period beginning in 1987 Canada plans to contribute about $550 million to nine nations in the region.

About $150 million will go through the Southern Africa Development Coordination Conference (SADCC), their own self-help organization, and the rest directly to individual nations.

A central goal is to help the SADCC countries take advantage of each other's resources to meet their needs.

For example, Canada is helping to build a $50 million electrical line that will let Botswana tap into the electrical resources of Zimbabwe and Zambia as an alternative to present South African sources.

Transportation is another key, for much of South Africa's economic power rests on the fact that many of the rail, sea and air links of these countries with the outside world run through South Africa.

Mozambique's long coast on the Indian Ocean provides alternatives to South African ports for the entire region, and Canada is involved in upgrading the railway line linking the Mozambiquan port of Nacala with Malawi.

Is dialogue within South Africa really possible?

The short-term outlook is not encouraging; despite some reforms in recent years, the South African government remains committed to white domination.

Meanwhile, Canada and other countries have kept open their own lines of communication, both with the South African government, and the black leadership.

When the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Joe Clark, visited South Africa in August 1987, he did not expect a breakthrough, but he found that a least both sides want an alternative to violence.

"Both sides said to me that to resolve the apartheid question by violence would be devastating for everyone in South Africa," he reported on his return.

Prospects are not bright for the near future but we must redouble our efforts to promote dialogue. In the meantime, violence continues.

Does Canada support violence in the struggle against apartheid?

Canada opposes the use of violence to settle political problems everywhere, and it has clearly stated its opposition to violence in South Africa.

It is tragic that many black South Africans have come to see violence as the only way to force the white government to meet their demands for equality.

Apartheid is at the root of violence on both sides in South Africa, so the only way to end the violence is to end apartheid.

Is this just a government matter, or do individual Canadians have a part to play?

The government has taken strong action against apartheid as a reflection of the views of the great majority of Canadians. As individuals and through voluntary and other organizations, the Canadian people play a vital part in the battle against the system of racial discrimination in South Africa.

Thousands of individuals have recorded their efforts in the Anti-Apartheid Register maintained by the Department of External Affairs. If you or your group would like to have your activity added to the long list of contributions by other Canadians, you can write to the Secretary of State for External Affairs in Ottawa.

This is how Canada puts pressure on South Africa

In addition to seeking openings for dialogue aimed at ending apartheid and providing assistance to the victims of apartheid inside and outside South Africa, Canada has adopted more than two dozen measures to put pressure on the South African government.

Trade has been slashed. Imports of South African coal, iron, steel, agricultural products, arms and uranium are banned, as is the sale of South African gold coins in Canada.

On the export side there are bans on Canadian sales of military-sensitive equipment like computers to the South African government or its agencies, and on sales of oil and refined products. In addition, Canadians exporting to South Africa cannot get Export Development Corporation insurance or benefit from the federal Program for Export Market Development.

The federal government itself buys no South African goods and services at all for its own use and does not enter into contracts with any majority-owned South African company.

There is also a ban on new investment in South Africa, Canadian banks do not make loans there, and Canada has terminated the agreement that used to prevent double taxation.

The Code of Conduct for Canadian companies operating in South Africa has been strengthened, encouraging them to treat black workers fairly. Many companies have voluntarily "disinvested" — that is, stopped operations in South Africa.

Sanctions have also limited both individual and official contacts. Direct air links with South Africa are banned. There is a voluntary ban on the promotion of tourism. Visas to visit Canada are no longer issued.

Official contacts are monitored and restricted and Canada has withdrawn accreditation to Canada of five South African attachés based in Washington.

CANADIAN FOREIGN POLICY CENTRE

NOTES

This publication is part of a series dealing with various aspects of Canadian foreign policy. Additional copies can be secured from the Domestic Information Services Division, Department of External Affairs, 125 Sussex Drive, Ottawa, K1A 0G2, telephone (613) 996-2898.